

# Personal MBA Coach's MBA Planning Guide

**personal  
MBA  
Coach.**

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## ABOUT PERSONAL MBA COACH

Personal MBA Coach has helped hundreds of applicants around the world get into top MBA, EMBA, part-time MBA and graduate programs including HBS, Stanford, Wharton, Chicago Booth, Kellogg, Columbia GSB, Dartmouth Tuck, MIT Sloan, London Business School, INSEAD, Yale SOM, UVA Darden, Duke Fuqua, Berkeley Haas, NYU Stern and many more with a 96% success rate. Last cycle our clients earned \$10M in total scholarships.

Personal MBA Coach was founded in 2008 by Scott Edinburgh, a former management consultant and industry strategist with an MBA from Wharton and a BS from MIT. With a boutique and personalized approach, Scott helps turn analytical, general management and client services experiences into the powerful and convincing stories that admissions committee members are looking for. Personal MBA Coach helps clients through all aspects of the application process, including application strategy, pre-application planning, GMAT/GRE/EA prep and school selection. Scott is on the Board of Directors and is a Committee Chair of AIGAC (Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants: an organization that meets annually with admissions directors of the top 25 schools globally). Learn how Personal MBA Coach can make your dreams a reality by walking you step by step through the entire process.

## SERVICES OFFERED

- Comprehensive Packages
- GMAT/GRE/EA Tutoring
- Interview Preparation
- Waitlist Support
- Gut Check
- Early MBA Planning

## WHAT SETS PERSONAL MBA COACH APART

- Founded by Scott Edinburgh, a Wharton MBA, member of AIGAC Board of Directors and industry veteran with 17 years of admissions consulting experience
- Scott presents globally and was invited to present to admissions directors at GMAC conference
- Prior corporate experience to inform your essays and goals, including consulting, banking and strategy
- Former M7 admissions directors and M7 MBA interviewers on our team
- Flexible scheduling and fast turnaround times
- Personalized and customized GMAT/GRE/EA tutoring
- One point of contact
- Direct, honest feedback
- Internal network of former clients at all top schools

# Comprehensive Packages Overview



## 1. Application Strategy & Story Development

Personal MBA Coach consultants learn more about your background and develop a thorough application strategy for you to follow, helping fine-tune your educational goals and articulate your distinct story. This includes compiling a list of schools you want to attend. Your consultant will review your credentials and work experience to help you identify what programs make sense for you based on factors like your test score, grades, scholarship desires, ideal study location and more.



## 2. Resume Review

Structure your MBA resume using our provided templates. We will go over your education and career accomplishments to paint an accurate picture of you on paper and make sure to turn your professional resume into an MBA resume that resonates with admissions directors. Our experts will help edit your resume so that it follows the correct format and uses effective language throughout. The Personal MBA Coach team knows what top schools are looking for when admitting students into their programs, so we make sure you stand out by including only important resume details.



## 3. Essay Brainstorming and Unlimited Essay Editing

Building from your personal story, you will partner with your admissions consultant to brainstorm topics and develop award-winning essays that allow you to stand out among other applicants. We provide you with school-specific insider knowledge as to what MBA programs are looking for in MBA application essays. You can submit your admissions essay and short-answer responses to us as many times as it takes to get them right. We provide you with feedback in two days and work seven days a week. We will check that you answer questions fully and provide enough detail to impress application essay reviewers. Count on Personal MBA Coach to catch spelling and grammar mistakes before the final submission of your personal development pieces.



## 4. Video Essay Feedback

Some of the leading MBA programs in the U.S., Europe and Canada require a video essay submission. For the live videos, we will send you software that you can use to practice sample video questions on your own.

Personal MBA Coach comprehensive packages involve sharing feedback on sample recordings to improve your confidence and perfect your video delivery.



## 5. Letter of Recommendation Support

To enhance your overall application, we will guide you through the process of selecting which of your contacts is best suited to write your letters of recommendation. Our consultants will help you develop the best timing and approach for reaching out and determining how much information and guidance your contact will need to write a letter that aligns with your overall application.



## 6. Interview Preparation

Personal MBA Coach organizes mock interviews with former M7 and T10 admissions interviewers from our team. Our interviewers provide you with written feedback to help you hone your skills. You have the option to participate in group interviews as well as to grow your skills for all interview structures. For Wharton, we will conduct mock group interviews with former group interviewers.



## 7. Pre/Post Interview Essay Editing

Harvard Business School, Chicago Booth and MIT Sloan ask that some candidates selected to interview submit an additional essay or video for their MBA program applications. Our personalized MBA admissions services in our comprehensive package include editing your follow-up written or recorded pieces. We will verify that your writing and speaking tone is consistent during the application process so that everything you submit is of the highest quality.



## 8. Waitlist Strategy & Post Acceptance Support

Our relationship does not end when you hit submit. Whether you are accepted or waitlisted, we will continue our personal support. Find out how and when to reach out to get off the waitlist, receive guidance on your waitlist update and get our advice on which school best suits your goals. We will connect you with former clients at your future school and across all schools as you join the small Personal MBA Coach alumni family.



## Making Your Career Work Harder For You

Without changing jobs, there are some steps you can and should be taking now to ensure that when you sit down to draft your MBA essays and prepare for your MBA interviews you have plenty to talk about.

### 1 . Be honest about your desires

That may seem simple, but many of us are afraid to be straightforward about our ambitions at work. Whether or not you can be transparent now about your MBA aspirations, let your manager in on your long-term goals. Tell them what skills you hope to master. If there is an experience at work you want to have, ask for it. Many managers will be more than happy to find projects to help you close existing skill gaps or develop new expertise. Tell them what skills you hope to master. If there is an experience at work you want to have, ask for it.

### 2 . Take on extra work

Yes, we really said this. Now is the time to ask for extra projects. Look specifically for the ones that can fill experience gaps. Even if you have already let your manager know about the skills you are looking to perfect pre-MBA, do not rely only on them to find assignments that fit your needs.

In an ideal world, you would work just on your dream projects, but we know that is not possible. By identifying your own additional projects, you will get more chances to build the skills you desire. With some companies managing through layoffs and hiring freezes, your extra efforts will be appreciated!

### 3 . Get involved at the office

Internal projects are a great way to beef up your pre-MBA leadership experience, and almost every company has an internal initiative that requires help. Offer to plan the next team-building activity, set up a training or speaker series, or lead recruiting efforts. If nothing exists, create it yourself. Starting a new program at work will score bonus points with your colleagues and give you plenty to share with admissions committees on your applications.



## Making Your Career Work Harder For You (cont.)

### 4 . Look for mentoring opportunities

Even if you have not had the chance to manage your own team, you can still begin to perfect your management skills. Take a new hire or even an intern under your wing and show them the ropes. If you can be a formal mentor, great! But if such an opportunity does not exist, an informal mentor relationship still supplements your pre-MBA leadership experience.

### 5 . Get your own mentor

Find someone you admire or connect with at work and invite them to a coffee or happy hour. Ask about their career. See if they are willing to give you general career guidance. At this stage, you do not want to ask for anything specific. Instead, start to build a relationship. Over time, you might be lucky enough to develop an office champion or a future recommender. Regardless, getting advice from someone more senior can always help.



## Enhancing Your Extracurricular Profile

Strengthening extracurricular profiles is one of the key areas Personal MBA Coach is working on with MBA candidates this January. By putting in the extra effort now, you will have ample opportunities to add real value before the deadlines this spring and beyond and avoid being penalized for not having a track record of involvement and leadership.

Below are three key guiding principles to keep in mind when determining the best extracurriculars for MBA application success.

### 1 . Quality over quantity

No one has the time to work with 10 different organizations. Having a laundry list of activities is not going to appeal to admissions committee members. Instead, focus your efforts on organizations or areas where you can have a real impact and add value. There is no “right” number of activities. This will vary from client to client and depend on the depth of your work. However, more often than not, less is more – particularly if you are just getting started now.

### 2 . Focus on leadership

You have probably heard this time and time again, but it is important enough to repeat: Business schools want leaders. This is true for all MBA programs, not just Harvard Business School. While there are countless ways that you can (and should) display leadership throughout your profile, extracurricular activities are one great opportunity to do so. Look for an organization where you can step up, or explore options to expand your role at an existing organization. Take the time to do this now so that you have clear results to share come essay time.

### 3 . Activities should fit with your profile

Successful applications share a consistent and impactful story. MBA admissions committees should instantly see who you are, what has defined you and why you have made specific choices. Choose areas that you are passionate about



## Enhancing Your Extracurricular Profile (cont.)

and that fit with your story. For example, if you want a career as an educational consultant, consider volunteering in the education industry. If your passion is tennis, give tennis lessons to underprivileged children in your neighborhood.

You do not need to pick the most unique or prestigious charity. Instead, do what you love! During application time, you will find many strategic ways to use your activities to fill gaps in your profile. Do not underestimate the importance of extracurriculars and get started today!





## Planning Ahead For The GMAT/GRE/EA

If you have not researched standardized tests since you took the SAT or ACT many years ago, a lot has changed. GMAT scores are valid for 5 years AND you can take the exam in-person up to 5 times during a 12-month period. There is a lifetime max of 8 tests, and you can take the test once every 16 calendar days.

**Note:** Starting from Jan 31st only the GMAT Focus will be offered.

Similarly, you can take the GRE once every 21 days and up to 5 times within any 12-month period. GRE scores are also valid for 5 years. There is currently no lifetime test limit for the GRE.

The Executive Assessment (EA) is a newcomer to the standardized test party. It has been used for EMBA applications, and more full-time schools are beginning to adopt it as well. At this time, Columbia Business School, Duke Fuqua, NYU Stern, UVA Darden, UCLA Anderson, CMU Tepper and Texas McCombs are among the top schools that accept the EA for full-time applications. The EA is a shorter test so if you are pressed for time, it may not be a bad option.

If you choose to take the GMAT or GRE, but you are not happy with the result, you can cancel your score and the report does not go to the school. This change has led to candidates taking an exam multiple times. Our average candidate now sits for an exam 2 to 4 times (with some giving the test even more tries). While this policy is great on the one hand, on the other, it has caused average scores to rise as more candidates cancel low scores.

MBA test preparation practices for applicants have also changed as online GMAT, GRE, and EA options continue to be available due to the coronavirus.

Some schools even have test waivers in place. While it is too early to know for certain, Personal MBA Coach would be surprised if the schools that offer these waivers rush to remove them. That said, securing a strong test score remains a great way to stand out as a competitive applicant.

As for retesting, the Graduate Management Admissions Council has adapted its policy, now allowing candidates to take the GMAT Online exam up to two times. These online exams count toward the yearly and lifetime limits for the GMAT, though verifiable technical issues will not count toward this retake limit.

## Planning Ahead For The GMAT/GRE/EA (cont.)

What does all this mean for MBA hopefuls? The pressure to perform is high and performing well takes advance planning! Personal MBA Coach has 5 MBA test preparation tips to ensure you maximize your score.

### 1 . Start earlier than you think you should!

This may seem obvious, but with scores valid for up to 5 years and the ability to retake the test, there is no reason to wait. In fact, the earlier in your career you take the test, the better.

You have mastered most of the skills tested in the GMAT/GRE in undergrad (if not before). That said, the longer you wait, the less you will remember about reading comprehension and math fundamentals.

### 2 . Take a practice test now to see your baseline.

Even if you do not intend to go full force on your studying just yet, take a practice test and see how you stack up. Check this score against your target schools to get a sense of what it means — to get started, check out Personal MBA Coach's [school guides](#) for average scores. Getting a feel for how much work you have ahead of you will allow you to be more honest with yourself when putting together a study plan.

### 3 . Set a schedule.

Be realistic about how many weeks you will set aside for studying and how many hours in each week you can carve out. Writing out a study plan will be easier to stick to and make it less likely that you will shortchange your prep time and need to cram last minute.

### 4 . Think about how you learn best and use this to inform your study plan.

You know how you learn best. Do you thrive with personal one-on-one support? Do you do your best learning from books or online? There are countless support options available for the GMAT/GRE/EA so think about what would be best for





## Planning Ahead For The GMAT/GRE/EA (cont.)

you and plan accordingly! Personal MBA Coach's tutors scored in the 99th percentile and are available to provide you with customized GMAT Focus, GRE and EA tutoring on your schedule and based on your specific needs. Our tutors also can advise which test is best for you before you begin your MBA test preparation.

### 5 . Read short articles in *The Economist* or *Science* every week.

This is a great way to sharpen your reading comprehension skills and expand your vocabulary. Pick a few short articles every week and make your life easier come test time with limited effort.



## Expanding Your Network For Long-Term Success

It should come as no surprise that networking is a key part of every long-term career strategy. It is also something that many of our clients struggle with. To get you on the right path this year, Personal MBA Coach has some tips on when and how to start MBA networking.

It is never too early to start networking. Whether you are planning to apply to business school later this year or a few years from now, a strong network will position you for success. You should look to build your network in four areas:

- At work
- With alumni/current students from your target schools
- With professionals in your preferred field
- With admissions professionals

To get you started, Personal MBA Coach has included one 30-day goal for each network.

### 1 . Network at work.

Find one mentor at work and begin to establish this relationship. Look for someone who knows you well and is more experienced. If the relationship progresses, it can be a source of solid career advice from someone who can identify your strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps this mentor could even write you a letter of recommendation when the time comes.

However, do not force the relationship. Start slowly by asking to schedule a coffee chat. Given that a lot of people are still working at least part time from home, many are anxious to find new ways to connect, so this invitation is likely to be well received. Then, ask a lot of questions to see if there is a good fit. Remember, finding a true mentor is a process, so do not get discouraged if it takes time to find the right person.

*30-day goal: Schedule one coffee chat.*



## Expanding Your Network For Long-Term Success (cont.)

### 2 . Network with students or alums at your target business schools.

Speaking to current students or alumni at your schools of choice is an important part of the process. Many candidates ask how many people they should reach out to. We advise two or three per school.

Having a laundry list of current students or alums you have reached out to is not necessary; including it anywhere in your application would be overkill for most schools. Instead, try to have a few meaningful conversations. Alumni directories from your undergraduate university or current/former firm and your personal network are great places to start.

*30-day goal: Locate and email two current students or alums about their business school experiences.*

### 3 . Network with professionals in your target field.

Setting up these relationships now is a great way to get a head start for recruiting time. Start small by finding someone who has your dream role and invite them for a coffee chat. This can certainly be virtual if needed. Tell them you want to learn more about their job and how they got there. Most people love to talk about themselves and are happy to help aspiring professionals. Avoid being too pushy, however. Meet at a time convenient for the professional and do not ask for anything. This is not the time to ask for help getting a job or for a recommendation. Instead, let the relationship grow organically.

Speaking with strangers can be intimidating but do not let this stop you. Meeting with alumni from your alma mater or friends of friends/family can be an easier place to begin. You should also take advantage of the Zoom culture that has emerged since the pandemic to reach people from other locations, allowing you to gain a broader view of your future industry and more easily connect with diverse professionals.

*30-day goal: Reach out to one professional and ask to schedule a meeting.*



## Expanding Your Network For Long-Term Success (cont.)

### 4 . Network with admissions professionals.

While there are many ways to connect with your target schools, MBA fairs are a great way to start. Personal MBA Coach is excited to be returning to MBA fairs in person this year!

You can meet multiple admissions professionals in one place and ask any burning questions. Even if your target schools are not scheduled to attend, these events can be great networking opportunities. Plus, you can get helpful tips from the presentations and other students. These events are easy and low risk.

*30-day goal: Locate one event in your area and register/put it on your calendar.*



I had a great experience working with Scott and the Personal MBA Coach Team. I was impressed by the structured and personalized support I received. As a result, I was able to stay on track throughout the application process from brainstorming for essays to preparing for interviews. Thanks to Scott's (and the rest of PMC's) help, I got accepted into 3 schools (2 M7 and 1 T15) with generous scholarships from all of them. I would highly recommend Scott and the Personal MBA Coach Team.

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— WHARTON



I cannot recommend the Personal MBA team enough. After interviewing with other companies, I responded best to Scott's firm and structured attitude; he was honest regarding gaps in my resume and collaborated with me on areas to improve. Scott assisted me throughout the process, motivating me to lift my test scores with tutoring services, narrowing down on a target school list, and pushing my essays farther when I was creatively tapped. I highly recommend working with Personal MBA Coach.

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— COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL



Scott was fantastic to work with. His advice and guidance helped me build exceptional applications that truly expressed my voice and my story, especially helping me shape my vague goals into something that could be communicated more succinctly. He was also comfortable talking through why to go with his recommended approach when I had questions, which was very helpful. I got into 4/6 schools I applied to, including an M7, and got a full-ride scholarship to one school!

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— LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

## LET PERSONAL MBA COACH HELP

Helping clients since 2008, our boutique one-on-one approach has led to a 96% success rate!

Call or email for a consultation with founder, Scott Edinburgh

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